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RURAL LIFE SERIES No. 7

ATTIC DUST AND TREASURES

BLANCHE EVANS HAZARD

The questions in the discussion paper of November, 1913, concerning certain table furnishings and historical relics in general have met with a cordial response. The photographs and letters describing heirlooms that have been received have given us courage to appeal to farmers' wives throughout the State of New York to go beyond their dining-rooms and china closets to their attics in search of more treasures.



Fig. 96.— A wedding gift to a New York bride in 1761

The appeal is made just now in order to save valuable historical material from its threatened fate during the spring house-cleaning. Knowing that you would not destroy those treasures in the attic if you realized that they were of value or of service to any person or community, I have thought of telling you just what sort of things might give unbounded delight to people of another century and meanwhile furnish necessary material to historians of the present day. With such material they

may be able to reconstruct the story of the past in your neighborhood and county, and present it as history for future generations to read and enjoy.

Deceptoyke Moghende Heeren But is office t'& sip t'evyron von Amsterdam achorkomy show is de 23 suptime myt raise raise Lant, orgalit up so thene manustins. rapported Dat ond wolch dark Rlost is it verlings lopes goks Hrowing gobby our findky all ark orbarkt grass t'Splant Manhatter Vay do word I granoch, book do wante vay 60 out is groot 11000 marges Subbition alle Long get mis great, the galf duguifo Jemay). Dark var zajudno munifichlik Van gounk-Rous, all taxus Hogger, Jakft, Gapik Downsoft. Anaxizant, Boontish's In rolas. Het Cargaforn van troje sthy is 7246 Bob KG wolles 1784 others siers 675. Others was 48. minho wells 36. vallage - wells 33 minoters 34 Hallo SolleRuho. (NOSE Gothen Baldas, In Not In goit. Joogs mogghin Jakis, gyt is Demograhio In Amsternam den 5? novem a lb 26 Ozove Hoo: Aloo: Drens Ewilly Re J. Fchagher D

Fig. 97.— Peter Schagen's letter

These writers of history feel that a search of private houses in cities is already hopeless, for families living in apartments have no attics. All the "old things" that did not seem beautiful or valuable enough to display in their living-rooms or to keep in vaults at the bank have been

put into the rubbish barrels — furniture, clothes, and records all faring alike. By happy chance here and there, in one case out of a hundred, some member of the family has gathered such treasures and given them over to an historical society in the city or the State in which he lives. This is a wise and generous thing to do. I am looking forward to the day when every county seat in the State of New York will have one or more rooms set apart in its courthouse for the meeting-place of its county historical society, and for the purpose of displaying the historical records and relics which its members will be glad to leave there, fully labeled, not only for safe keeping, but also for the pleasure of neighbors and of children of surrounding communities.

Some records, you can easily understand, belong to a whole county or State rather than to a single person. For example, a letter such as Peter Schagen's is too valuable and of too general interest to keep in one family's store chest, because it gives such a good picture of early New York life when the Dutch were settling New Amsterdam. I want you to have an opportunity to read the letter here and to see just how it looked when Peter Schagen wrote it nearly three hundred years ago.

"High and Mighty Lords:

"Yesterday arrived here the ship, the Arms of Amsterdam, which sailed from New Netherland . . . on the 23d of September. They report that our people are in good heart and live in peace there. . . . They have purchased the Island of Manhattes from the Indians, for the value of sixty guilders. . . . They had all their grain sowed by the middle of May, and reaped by the middle of August. They sent thence samples of summer grain, such as wheat, rye, barley, oats, buckwheat, canary seed, beans and flax.

"The cargo of the aforesaid ship is:

7246 beaver skins

178章 otter skins

675 otter skins

48 minck skins

36 wild cat skins

33 mincks

34 rat skins



Fig. 98.— The first warehouse on Manhattan

Considerable oak timber and hickory

"Herewith, High and Mighty Lords, be commended to the mercy of the Almighty.

"Your High Mightinesses' obedient,

'P. Schagen.

"In Amsterdam, Nov. 5, A. D. 1626." 1

¹ Quoted from "Indians and pioneers." Blanche Evans Hazard and Samuel T. Dutton, Boston, 1807.

Later, after Peter Stuyyesant came to be Governor, some one of the little colony in New Amsterdam wrote a letter home saying, "Mynheer



Fig. 99.— Peter Stuyvesant

Stuyvesant introduces here a thorough reform." A letter from Stuyvesant himself showed the need of his action. He said, "The people here are without discipline and approaching the savage state. A fourth part of the city of New Amsterdam consists of rumshops and houses where nothing can be had but beer and tobacco." We can be surprised that even then there were social and ethical problems in Manhattan Borough, and we can also feel ourselves coming nearer to Peter Stuyvesant through sympathy for him in his perplexities. Suppose these letters and these pictures had been lost instead of having been

properly saved and given over to the archives of the old Amsterdam city!

Another illustration from revolutionary times will serve to show how pleasure may be given to future generations by the saving of correspondence. We now are able to reconstruct the history of the aid given by France in general, and by

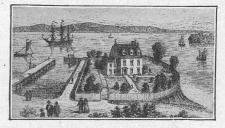


Fig. 100.— Governor Stuyvesant's home, The Whitehall, 1658

Beaumarchais in particular, to our revolutionary forefathers through the letters and diaries kept by interested French families. Beaumarchais helped us under the guise of a socalled firm, Roderigue Hortalez & Co. This is a part of a brief but typical letter sent to our Continental Congress:

"Gentlemen, consider my house as the head of all operations useful to your cause in Europe, and myself as the most zealous partisan of your nation, the *soul of your successes*, and a man profoundly filled with the respectful esteem with which I have the honor to be,

Roderigue Hortalez & Co." 2

² Quoted from "Beaumarchais and the American Revolution." Blanche Evans Hazard. Published by the general Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Boston. 1910.

HIS INDENTURE made the Fifteenth Day of May

in the Sath - Year of the Independence of the State of New York, and in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred
and 19/11/100 - BETWEEN Samuel Dodge Samiel Granal Granal Commissioners of Forfeitures, for the Market Deliviet, appointed in Pursuance of an Act of the Legislature of the said State, Commissioners of Forseitures, for the Monde — Dittrict, appointed in Puriuance or an Act of the Legislature of the said State, entitled, "An Ast for the Forseiture and Sale of the Estates of Persons, who have adhered to the Enemies of this State, and for declaring the Sovereignty of the People of this State, in respect to all Property within the same," of the one Part, AND John Green — of the Walking December in the County of Willie — of the State aforesaid, of the other Part. WITNESSETH that the said Commissioners, by Virtue of the Power and Authority to them, in and by the said Act granted, and for, and in Consideration of the Sum of Minesty Potential State, HAVE granted, bargained, sold, enseoffed, and confirmed; and by these Presents do grant, bargain, sell, enseoff and confirm, unto the condition of the Sum of the Sum of the said State, HAVE granted, bargained, sold, enseoffed, and confirmed; and by these Presents do grant, bargain, sell, enseoff and confirm, unto the condition of the sum of the sum of the sum of the said State, HAVE granted, bargained, sold, enseoffed, and confirmed; and by these Presents do grant, bargain, sell, enseoff and confirm, unto the said to be the said selection. and to his Heirs and afligns, ALL that certain Tract or Parcel of Land, fituate in the Precinity. The Michillinthe Granty of orcined Begining at a State and Stone in the line of John Moor's Land Runing There do Forty five degrees ast Forty three 6 hami along Jaid Moores a not to a heary of tones, Thence South Henery Wierner to a Stake and Stones about it, I hond Horth and all and fingular the Estate, Right, Title and Interest, whether in Possession, Reversion or Remainder, of in or to the said Premises, which in Consequence of any Conviction or Attainder, is become forseit, attached, or vested in, or to the People of the said State. TO HAVE AND TO HOLD, all and fingular the faid Premises, hereby granted, largained, fold, enseoffed, and confirmed, with the Appurtenances, unto the faid solving seen his Heirs and fligns, to the only proper Use and Behoof of the said solving seen and to he Heirs and Affigns forever. IN WI NESS whereof, the faid Parties to these Presents, have hereunto interchange ably set their Hands and Seals, the Day and Year first above wrightn. SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED, 7 IN THE PRESENCE OF US.

FIG. 101.— This indenture shows the typical fate of the loyalists and their property in New York and elsewhere at the hands of the patriots in the revolutionary epoch



This fantastic letter puzzled our revolutionary Congressmen, and they died leaving the puzzle unsolved and Beaumarchais unpaid. As a result such letters as this one were addressed to the Continental Congress of 1787:

"To the President of the Continental Congress: I dare hope sir that touched by the importance of the affair, and by the force of my reasons, you will do me the favor of honoring me with an official answer as to the course which the honorable Congress will determine upon —

whether to verify my account quickly and pay on that verification like any just sovereign, or at length to appoint arbitrators in Europe to decide the points;

. . or finally to write to me, without equivocation that the sovereigns of America, forgetting my past services, refuse me all justice." ³

Not only political and diplomatic history, but our industrial history as well, is dependent on letters and records. In working over the boot and shoe industry in Massachusetts before 1873, I have utilized, not only the recollections of old men and women who have worked on handmade shoes in their homes, but also the account books, bills, tools, and lasts that they have found in their attics.

Under the eaves of an attic in North Brookfield, Massachusetts, I



Fig. 102.— Colonial regimentals

found the account books of the "general store" of Skinner and Ward for 1813 to 1815. The accounts show that between December 21, 1813, and July 10, 1815, Reuben Underwood made \$10.90 worth of shoes to put on sale. Doliver and Norwell, joining forces, worked on a larger scale. The same books show that between July 2 and November 1, 1813, they made \$155.25 worth of shoes "to be left" at Skinner & Ward's "on account." The account stands as follows:

³ Quoted from "Beaumarchais and the American Revolution." Blanche Evans Hazard. Published by the general Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Boston. 1910.

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Fig. 103.— This leaf of an old account book of 1783 tells the story of the care of the poor in a New York town before the day of almshouses. The poormaster had to charge for both time and services, as well as for moneys actually expended for the town's wards

1813		
July 2.	By shoes taken and left	\$47.79
Aug. 9.	" 43.54, Aug. 14, shoes 18.72	62.26
Oct. 4.	" " 1.04, Oct. 16, " 13.50	14.54
Oct. 27.	" 29.62, Nov. 11, " 1.04	30.66
	Total	\$155.25

This was a good bit of evidence to put with other bits, in preparing the general statement that in scores of little shoemaking towns the transition from bespoke, or ordered, work at the custom shoemaker's to extra, or sale, work came naturally.

"There were times when the more advanced apprentices or even the journeymen spoiled a pair of shoes started for a definite customer, and

these remained on the master's hands to be disposed of. Then there were slack times when the apprentices might fairly be expected to 'eat their own heads off,' to the shoemaker's loss. In such a case the craftsman ventured to make up the stock on hand, to employ this otherwise wasting labor, and then tried to dispose of the shoes in the village grocery store. Since the market was

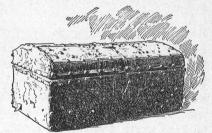


Fig. 104.— An old-fashioned trunk

uncertain and slow for this extra work, both stock and labor may frequently have been below the standard used in the custom-made shoes. It might naturally happen that the demands would be more steady and the profits could be relatively higher for this lower cost work, even when it was all done at the direction of the same master shoemaker in the same shop and by the same workers by simply using different standards and different grades of stock. In case the shoemakers lived in villages too far from Boston to attract customers but near enough to send in their surplus product, their attention to sale work would steadily grow. A seemingly typical case, with all its local flavor, can be followed in detail in the bills, letters, account books, and oral traditions of Quincy Reed of Weymouth. He expected to be a shoemaker, just as his great-grandfather William, who landed in Weymouth in 1635, and his grandfather and father had been. In 1800 the father was a master with custom work and probably some sale work for local consumption. As Quincy tells the story: 'My brother Harvey began it by taking chickens to Boston. He had a pair of chaise wheels in the barn, and putting on a top piece, loaded her up and drove to town. He hung some shoes on the chaise and we sold them in Boston. We

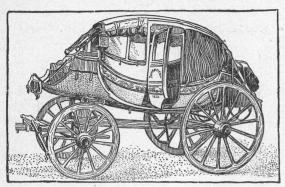


Fig. 105.— A stagecoach of 1829

did not have a wagon then,—I can remember when there wasn't a wagon in this part of the town, and between here and East Abington there was only one pair of wheels. All the shoes (custom-order and extra 'sale' shoes) before we began business were carried into Boston in saddle bags.

. . . We hired a

store of Uriah Cotting at 133 Broad Street and fitted it up. Then I used to keep a chest of shoes in a cellar near Dock Square and on Wednesday and Saturday would bring out the chest and sell. I got \$15 and \$20 a day by it in 1809. I was sixteen and my brother was eighteen years old then. We moved into the Broad Street store with two bushels of shoes. I used to cut out what would promise to be \$100 worth a day. We couldn't have them made equal to that, but I could cut them. One day I cut 350 pair of foot fronts and tended store besides. Most of the shoes were made by people in South Weymouth. We had nearly every man there working for us before long.

Used to bring out the sole leather swung a cross the horse's back in those days. We didn't have any capital to start with except father's assurance that "the boys are all right and will pay their debts." When we got of age Harvey paid father \$1000 for his time and I paid him \$3000.

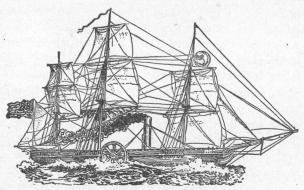


Fig. 106.— An early steamboat

By then we had got up a stock of \$10,000 and I have the inventory now to prove it. We were getting \$2 for the best shoes and \$1.25 to \$1.50 for the West India shoes.'"

The Subscriber do hereby bertily that the Signs Woman that I Baicofil of Jo han Sail Shall have the privatings of going free when shee Shall pay the the principle and interestments I gave for her which for inciple awas secenty five pounds and that the two female blutderen I had with her Shall be free a faye of twenty five years the one being three a years of on the hurteenth day of December last and the other one year all the twelth day of this instant as Stotness my hand and Soat this twenty first day of much one thousand Eight hundred and one Sittings heresent Methylah Badion

Fig. 107.— Document concerning the sale and manumission of negro slaves in New York

The collection of papers from which this last letter is taken are in the ell of the house in Weymouth, Massachusetts, and, although they are carefully docketed and packed in cases, the room itself is too damp for them. The ink is fading rapidly and the sticky yellow mold might make many of you housekeepers shudder. These papers would be safer in a well-lighted, carefully ventilated, historicalsociety room, where they could be locked up or guarded by a regular attendant who had power and time to show them on demand. Otherwise they should be put into a good case and kept in the main part of the Reed house. They are too valuable for ell or attic. The present mistress of the Reed household told me of her trials in giving the papers space and occasional care, in order to humor the whim first of her old father and then of her brother. She expressed her delight that at



Fig. 108.—A sampler such as every New York girl made in early days

last the records were doing some good instead of merely making trouble. I realized as I talked with her that there were two possible



Fig. 109.—A doll two hundred and fifty years old

viewpoints regarding such records, and I appreciated her willingness to care for them in the future if they would be of any value to others. That is just the idea that I want to pass on to you housekeepers of New York State whose attics have always seemed to be so hopeless and are now threatening to grow more so with the accumulation of coming years. You may groan involuntarily at the suggestion of sorting out, saving certain of the things, and then planning to keep them more carefully in the future. Yet, after all, it is just a case of planning. Decide on what is rubbish, and then decide to destroy the rubbish and keep the remainder.

In fancy I can shut my eyes and go up to your attic with you and see things as they are. Over there is the first child's cradle and the doll house of

the daughter who went away to normal school and who now is out west teaching. You like to sit down in front of the toy and recall



Fig. 110 a.— New Amsterdam in 1673

how Marion looked as she played with it in old days. Because you enjoy being able to see this doll house, you resent your husband's action in placing pieces of broken furniture, old mattresses, some pillows, and a comfortable on top and in front of it just in order to save floor space. The business books of your husband and of his father, who kept the village grocery store, seem useless trash that take up too much floor space, and so you have pushed them back farther and farther under the eaves. Won't you see whether these accounts are becoming damp and moldy there? If they are, don't drag them out and burn them as you threaten to do; just spread them in the sunlight near the window, dry them, and then take that comfortable off the playhouse heap and cover the books carefully. Find all the business papers that you can, written between 1775 and 1875—not only account books, but letters, files of bills, and orders; pack them in a wooden box and label them plainly. Let me know some time where they are, what business they represent, and whether you would like to let any one look over and use the older ones with or without mention of names just as I have used the papers that I have quoted.

Then go through the trunks and boxes in search of old clothes. See whether any of them belong to your husband's Dutch ancestors or to some soldier of the Revolutionary War. Why not sponge off the garments, place them in the sunshine so that no moths will be attracted to eat them, and then press and label each piece before putting it back into the trunk so that when your children are writing and staging a historical play, such as the "Good Angels of Valley Forge" or "The Dutch Patroon's Delights," you can furnish original costumes for them? If you can, find some more clothes belonging to children and women of any century or any decade of the past. I have always been glad that this picture of Madam Riedesel has been kept, showing the clothes that the dainty diplomatic lady wore after the battle of Saratoga. Her interesting account of that battle, and of General Schuyler's courtesy to her and her chil-



Fig. 110 b.— New Amsterdam in 1673

dren, are made the more fascinating to us by seeing in this picture the very woman before whom General Schuyler made his polite bows.

Save any bonnets, lace shawls, or mits of your great-grandmothers and great-aunts, or even of your grandmothers and own aunts, because two centuries from now they in turn will be "over two centuries old." Hunt for dolls and see how they look. Next, in the drawers and pigeonholes of that old secretary in the corner, hunt for paper money, either the continental currency or the script of the early nineteenth century, and for picture cards advertising the sailing of vessels down



Fig. 111.— Madame Riedesel

the Mississippi River or around the Horn. You may find advertisements of Connestoga wagons represented as being the best and only proper means of conveyance from York State to the fertile fields of Iowa and to the gold mines near the Pacific coast. Do you know whether any of your family took shares in the Erie Canal or in any of the early railroad projects in central New York? All documents relating to that business would be likely to give you pictures of early locomotives and of old stagecoaches in contrast. Wouldn't your sons and grandsons and your coming great-grandsons be delighted if you and your husband could find an old flintlock, such as they used in the war of 1812,

and the uniform of some one of your name who fought in both the Mexican War and the Civil War? Was your brother by chance a drummer boy in the New York 22d Regiment? Can you find any of his regimentals? Even a cap and a drumstick would be worth finding and saving.

Perhaps you will discover the quilting frames and the old quilts that used to give, not only comfort to sleepers, but also happy waking hours to dames and maidens who worked and gossiped at quilting bees. Don't let the parts of the low flax wheel get lost or broken. Can you find the cards, swifts, and reels for preparing the wool after your ancestors

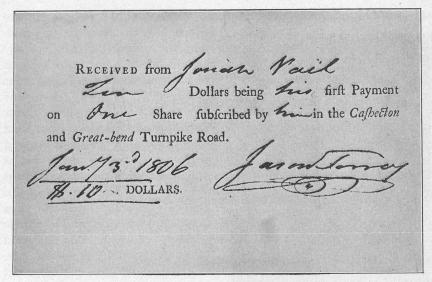


Fig. 112.— This document shows how early transportation projects were financed in New York State



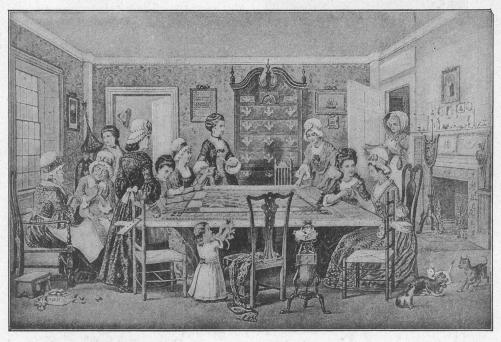


Fig. 114.— A quilting bee

had sheared it off the backs of the sheep, which used to browse over there



Fig. 115.— A Quaker costume

discussion paper I am putting some questions which you may be ready, and perhaps eager, to answer after your search is over. My earnest hope is that your house-cleaning this year may not be made more arduous, but more interesting, as interesting as a game to you,

on the hills that you see now from the attic window? Have you by happy chance a big hand loom at which your mother watched your grandmother weave homespun? Wouldn't you like to have your Cornell Study Club look up the old ways of spinning and weaving, and of dyeing the woolen and cotton as well, and then in the winter months devote some club afternoons to weaving on your loom? If you can make a common fund of artistic products of high standard and value, they would find a good sale. One community after another could build up and support such by-industries for farmers' wives. Before long, perhaps, another Reading-Course lesson will be devoted to just such a plan. Meanwhile, in this lesson, let me beg you to search and save that which otherwise may soon be lost, not only to you, but also to coming generations. In the

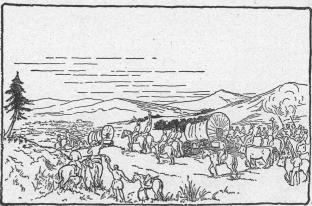


Fig. 116.— Connestoga wagons on the Oregon trail

through our urgent plea and pertinent questions.

This Indenture, made day of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and minety-nine, between James Reeves, Eli Corwin 2d, Nathaniel Wells, Jonathan Owens 1st, Jonathan Owens 2d, William Carpenter, and Israel Wickham, Trustees of the first incorporated Congregational Society in Middle-Town, in the Town of Walkill, county of Orange, and State of New-York, of the first part, and of the Town of Walkill and county Pasiah Tail aforeiaid, of the fecond part, witnesseth, that the said parties of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of dellars to them in hand paid, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, have granted, bargained and fold, aliened, released and confirmed, and by these prefents do grant, bargain, alien, release and confirm unto the said party of the second part, his heirs and assigns for ever, ALL that certain Leat __ in the Meeting House belonging to faid Congregational Society, known by No. 35 on the the lower florin faid Meeting House, together with the appurtenances to the same belonging, in as full and ample a mauner as the faid Trustees now have in themselves, in the same with the appurtenances, TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the faid John Sail Seal to the faid party of the second part, his heirs and affigns for ever, upon this express condition, nevertheless, that the said party of the second part, his heirs and affigns pay, or cause to be paid to the said Trustees or their succeffors in office, the yearly falary which now is, or hereafter to be affeffed on faid to be paid yearly and every year, for the purpose of supporting the Minister who shall be in due standing as Pastor or Teacher in faid Congregation, and the faid party of the second part, for himself his heirs and affigns, doth covenant, grant and agree with the faid Trustees and their fuccessors in office, that upon non-payment of the yearly salary as aforesaid when the same shall become due, that then and in such case it 'shall be lawful for the said parties of the first part or their successors in office, to enter into the property of said and rent the same for the purpose of defraying the Ministers salary, as asfessed upon said few Seat until the said party of the second part, his heirs and affigns shall comply with the said affessment and discharge the fame. In testimony whereof the said Trustees to these presence have subscribed their names and affixed the seal of the Corporation the day and year first above written. SIGNED SEALED AND DELIVERED IN THE PRESENCE OF US

Fig. 117.— A New York parish document, which will help students of to-day to understand the old church economy

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